



### From the Director of Victim Services

Dating violence is more common than people think, especially among teens and young adults: one in three teens in the US will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from someone they're in a relationship with before they become adults, and nearly half (43%) of college women report experiencing violent or abusive dating behaviors.

Every February, young people and their loved ones join together across the country for a national effort to raise awareness about the issue of teen dating violence through Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM). This annual, month-long push focuses on advocacy and education to stop dating abuse before it starts.

The theme for TDVAM 2021 is Know Your Worth. Know Your Worth is all about learning about healthy relationships and self-empowerment! Every young person is deserving of a healthy, loving relationship.

If you or a loved one is in an abusive relationship, please get help. Call 866-331-9474 or text "loveis" to 22522.

*Tamika Dobbins*

## February 2021

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### Victim Services Mission

*To support victims, their families, and the laws that protect their rights, while utilizing recognized principles of offender behavioral change to help reduce the risk of repeat criminal behavior.*

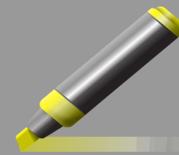
#### Victim Services Provides:

- Information regarding the status of offenders in prison with felony convictions
- Registration for victim notification
- Assistance with threats, unwanted calls/correspondence from an offender

#### Victim Services Activities:

- Community education programs
- Coordination with the Board of Parole, Attorney General's Office, and the Tennessee District Attorney General's Office to respond to victims' concerns
- Education to TDOC staff to increase awareness of victims' issues
- Collaboration with other victim advocates

# Victims Services Highlights....Let's meet



Verna Wyatt, Co-Founder, Tennessee Voices For Victims

Motivated by grief over the 1991 abduction, rape, and murder of her sister-in-law, Verna began her personal journey of activism advocating for the rights of crime victims. She has worked in a professional capacity on behalf of victims since that time, and has gained a solid reputation in Tennessee with victims, law enforcement, and justice professionals. In 2012, along with Valerie Craig and Sara Kemp, she Co-Founded Tennessee Voices

For Victims. As a state-wide crime victim advocacy organization, the mission is to speak out for the rights of victims, to help victims find their voice and promote their restoration, and to prevent crime through community education and awareness. Verna and Valerie pioneered Victim Impact Programming for incarcerated men and women in Tennessee, and have been facilitating weekly classes with incarcerated men and women for 15 years. Leaning on their years of co-facilitating weekly victim impact classes in Tennessee prisons and jails, they created a victim impact curriculum centered on, and supported by the evidence-based victim impact curriculum produced by the OVC. The goal of victim impact education is to understand the impact that crime has on the victim, and to awaken awareness and accountability.

Verna has served on numerous Boards and Commissions over the decades including 8 years on the Tennessee POST Commission, The Sex Offender Treatment Board, Governor Haslam's Task Force on Recidivism and Sentencing, and the Judicial Nominating Commission. She currently serves on The Children's Justice Task Force, The Tennessee Council for Interstate Adult Offender Supervision and serves on a subcommittee of Governor Lee's Criminal Justice Reform Task Force.

Past awards and recognition include the 2005 Presidents Award from the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police, the 2012 Correction Corporation of America Volunteer of the Year, 2014 Edwina Hefner Community Leadership Award from the Nashville Symphony, 2014 Board of Probation Victim Service Award, and 2015 Union University's Champion of Victims' Rights Award.

Website: [www.tnvoicesforvictims.org](http://www.tnvoicesforvictims.org)



## Creating a Trauma-Informed Court Environment

Courts are inherently negative environments. For the most part, people who are coming to court are not coming for good reasons. Defendants, witnesses, victims, attorneys, law enforcement officers are generally not coming to court because they want to. As a result, court environments are inherently stressful — which provides fertile ground for people who struggle with trauma, profound grief or loss, and numerous other mental health challenges to experience intense emotional responses. All workplaces should be trauma-informed, and courts are no exception.

Trauma-informed care is an approach used to engage with people with histories of trauma. It recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma can play in peoples’ lives. Trauma-informed responses in the criminal justice system can help to avoid re-traumatizing individuals. This increases safety for all, decreases the chance of an individual returning to criminal behavior, and supports the recovery of justice-involved individuals with serious mental illness.

Key points to creating a trauma-informed court include:

Believing that being trauma-informed is now the expectation, not the exception.

Asking, “What happened to you?”, instead of, “What’s wrong with you?”

Viewing the process of “holding people accountable” with compassion.

Using a compassionate lens when engaging with anyone.

Learning how to de-escalate stressful situations.

Treating people with dignity and respect — people who interact with the court system remember most how they were treated.

In short, if you are not sure how to get started with creating a trauma-informed work environment, just be kind — you simply do not know what life experiences people carry with them.



### TDOC Central Office Monthly Stats

Telephone Calls	January	Notifications	January
Phone calls Received/Returned	151	Registrations/Voice	131
Parties Registered for Notifications (phone/mail/fax/email)	97	Movement	57
Harassment/Threats/No Contact	8	Advance Release	876
Referrals	36	Final Release *	34
Release/Parole Inquiry	34	Death	23
Other	69	Other	12

# Announcements



**SUPPORT VICTIMS. BUILD TRUST. ENGAGE COMMUNITIES.**

**National Crime Victims' Rights Week April 18-24, 2021**

**YOU HAVE THE POWER** From You Have the Power  
**Training Opportunities**

**February**  
Join **You Have the Power** and **Metro Office of Family Safety** for an interactive presentation in recognition of **Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month**. Learn about healthy relationships and join a breakout room to learn more about teen dating violence or "walk in the shoes" of a teenager who has experienced it.  
Friday, February 26, 2021 10:00pm - 2:30pm Central  
Scan to Register

**March**  
**The Unseen Impact:**  
Join **You Have the Power** and experts as we examine and discuss the impact of traumatic brain injuries on victims of domestic violence and on their journey toward safety and healing.  
Stay tuned for more details!  
Wednesday, March 24, 2021 11:30am - 1:00pm Central  
Scan to Register

**April**  
Join **You Have the Power** and experts for a series of discussions in recognition of **Child Abuse Awareness Month**. Learn what child abuse is, the impact of the pandemic on child abuse situations and reporting, understanding neglect and verbal and emotional abuse, and creating positive childhood experiences.  
Stay tuned for more details!  
Every Thursday in April, beginning April 8th 12:00pm - 1:30pm Central  
Scan to Register

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## Tennessee Department of Correction

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WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOU ARE A  
**VICTIM OF CRIME**

WHAT VICTIMS CAN DO IF THEY'RE A

- Tennessee Domestic Violence Hotline - 800-356-6767
- National Domestic Violence Hotline - 800.799.SAFE
- Battered Women's Justice Project - 800.903.0111
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving - 877.MADD.HELP
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children - 800.843.5678
- Tennessee Human Trafficking Hotline—1-855-558-6484
- National Human Trafficking Hotline - 888.373.7888
- Criminal Injuries Compensation: Corvel Corporation 866.960.6039